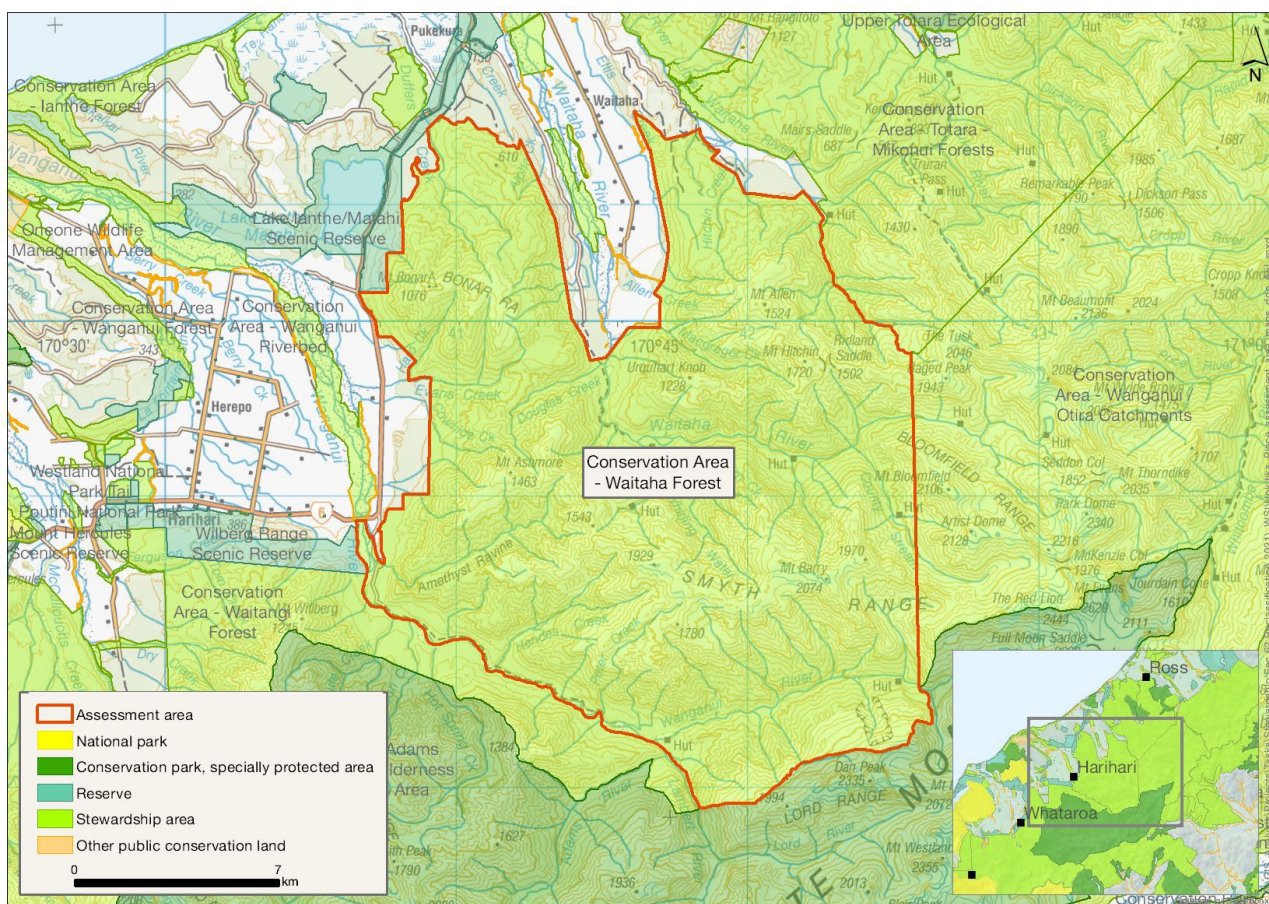


Stewardship Land Review: Recommendation

HOK_52 – Waitaha Forest

Departmental Region	Management Place	Technical report	Assessment #	Held Under
Western South Island	Hokitika	DOC-6957277	HOK_52	s62

Waitaha Forest



Protected Areas	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Waitaha Forest	30814.7252	2805641	25

Recommendation on Reclassification

Western South Island National Panel Recommendation

The Western South Island National Panel recommends:

- The Conservation Area 'Waitaha Forest' (NaPALIS #2805641) is declared to be held for conservation purposes, pursuant to section 7(1) of the Conservation Act 1987, is classified pursuant to section 18(1) of the Conservation Act 1987 as a section 19 Conservation Park, and is named the 'Waitaha Conservation Park'.
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Mana Whenua Panel Recommendation

The Mana Whenua Panel recommends:

- The Conservation Area 'Waitaha Forest' (NaPALIS #2805641) be held as Stewardship Land.
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Western South Island National Panel Justification for Recommendation – Executive Summary

The assessment area spans from the lowlands to the high alpine, containing a rich diversity of landforms and extensive and diverse forest associations and sequences. The area is of a very high level of naturalness and contains numerous streams and most of the Waitaha River catchment, as well as part of the headwaters of Wanganui River. Several naturally rare ecosystems are present, and the area supports a diversity of common, threatened and at-risk flora, fauna and freshwater species. It is noted as a very important catchment for blue duck/whio (Nationally Vulnerable), which is seen to reflect the level of naturalness and health of the system. Recreation values are present associated with a diversity of activities, including tramping, hunting, rafting and kayaking, with many users accessing remote areas via helicopter charters. Heritage values are present relating to historic South Westland transport routes, including three recorded archaeological sites.

Ngāi Tahu has indicated future economic wellbeing and development aspirations for this whenua, such as from hydro power generation.

The classification as conservation park is considered to reflect the mosaic of values present, protecting natural and historic resources while facilitating public recreation and enjoyment of the area.

It is noted that the Conservation Areas ‘Waitaha River/Kakapotahi River’ (NaPALIS #2805517, HOK_48), ‘Little Waitaha River’ (NaPALIS #2805518 & #2805635, HOK_49) and ‘Waitaha Riverbed’ (NaPALIS #2805634 & #2805643, HOK_50) have similarly been recommended as part of the ‘Waitaha Conservation Park’.

Mana Whenua Panel Justification for Recommendation

The Mana Whenua Panel considers that Conservation Area ‘Waitaha Forest’ (NaPALIS #2805641) should be held as stewardship land. The Mana Whenua Panel notes the potential opportunities for hydrogeneration in this area and its importance for community resilience on the West Coast. Therefore reclassification should not occur at this time.

Notwithstanding this, the Mana Whenua Panel expressly reserves the right of Ngāi Tahu to seek to have the classification of this area reviewed in the future. There is a deep connection between Ngāi Tahu and all of the whenua in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā. The interests of Ngāi Tahu in this area may change over time which may require the classification to be revisited. In addition, more appropriate forms of protected area classifications from a Ngāi Tahu perspective may be developed through conservation law reform.

Western South Island National Panel Justification for Recommendation

1. *Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi Obligations*

The Western South Island National Panel is required to give effect to the principles of The Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in accordance with section (4) of the Conservation Act 1987.

The panel acknowledges that the assessment area is within the Ngāi Tahu takiwā and the rohe of Poutini Ngāi Tahu, and as such appreciates the connection between Ngāi Tahu and the whenua. In making the above recommendation the panel has considered the values and interests of Ngāi Tahu as presented to them. This information has been considered in conjunction with the content provided in the corresponding technical reports.

The panel acknowledges that the Mana Whenua Panel is supportive of hydrogeneration activities in this area. In forming the above recommendation, the panel has endeavoured to take the identified values into account.

2. *Treaty Settlement Obligations*

No Treaty/Tiriti settlement obligations are identified in the West Coast Te Tai o Poutini Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) that specifically relate to this assessment area.

3. *Consideration of Adjoining Land Classification*

The panel is required to consider the classification(s) of adjacent and nearby public conservation land, enabling a 'landscape' approach to the reclassification work to be implemented.

The assessment area forms an integral part of a huge expanse of protected land extending west from Tiritiri o Te Moana/the Southern Alps. It borders the extensive Tōtara-Mikonui Forests Conservation Area (HOK_43), the conservation areas Wanganui/Ōtira Catchments (HOK_19), Waitangi Forest (TWP_05), Wanganui Riverbed (TWP_06); the Lake Ian/Matahi and Pukekura scenic reserves; and the Adams Wilderness Area. The recommendation of conservation park is considered to reflect the mosaic of values present while providing landscape continuity with the adjacent large blocks of stewardship land similarly recommended as conservation park – HOK_19 (part), HOK_43, TWP_05 and TWP_06.

4. *Conservation Justifications*

The panel recommendation is required to include clear conservation justifications. These conservation justifications are addressed in sections 4 (a), (b), (c) and (d), based on information identified in the corresponding technical reports.

a. *Identified Landscape Values*

This large area includes north of the upper Wanganui River and the upper Waitaha River catchments. It extends from the lowlands to the mountains. The landscape is dissected, steep and forested with semi-braided riverbeds and multiple other waterways. Alpine environments including glaciers occur above the treeline. The Morgan Gorge and Waitaha Gorge are features on upper Waitaha River. The area forms the extensive mountainous and forested backdrop to the adjacent lowlands and floodplains. It is highly natural with a rich diversity of geological, landform and vegetation characteristics. It is remote with very high natural character. The whole represents a homogenous, rich and diverse landscape mosaic. Much of it is Outstanding Natural Landscape.

b. *Identified Ecological Values*

The assessment area spans from the lowlands (c. 60 m above sea level) to the high alpine (2074 m), containing a rich diversity of landforms and extensive and diverse forest associations forming sequences to the treeline/subalpine shrubland zones. The alpine zone contains extensive snow tussockland, rocky areas/bluffs and associated scree/boulderfields in addition to areas of fellfield, wetland, snowbank, and other alpine vegetation. The area is of a very high level of naturalness and contains numerous streams and most of the Waitaha River catchment, as well as part of the headwaters of Wanganui River. Several naturally rare ecosystems are present, including braided riverbeds, cushion bogs, flushes/seepages, and snowbanks. The area supports a diversity of common, threatened and at-risk flora, fauna and freshwater species, including the threatened herb *Mazus novaezeelandiae* subsp. *Impolitus* (Nationally Endangered). It is noted as a very important catchment for threatened blue duck/whio (Nationally Vulnerable), which is seen to reflect the level of naturalness and health of the system. The classification of conservation park is considered to reflect the identified ecological values, being managed to ensure the long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity.

c. *Identified Recreation Values*

The assessment area contains recreation values associated with a diversity of activities. There is an established network of tracks linked by associated huts, maintained in partnership between the Department and volunteer groups such as Permolat Trust and The Backcountry Trust. The area is widely used by trampers and hunters. Rafters and kayakers utilise a range of rivers in the area, including guided operations on Wanganui River. Many hunters, trampers, kayakers and rafters access remote areas via helicopter charters. The classification of conservation park is considered to provide for these recreational values, being managed to facilitate public recreation and enjoyment as a secondary objective.

d. *Identified Heritage Values*

The assessment area contains heritage values relating to historic South Westland transport routes. It includes three recorded archaeological sites, the Wanganui River bridge, the Hendes

Ferry site and a water race which follows Duffers Creek. The above recommendation is considered to accommodate these heritage values, being managed so that historic resources are protected as a primary objective.

5. *Current Land Use*

The assessment area contains a telecommunications licence, a structure lease for a hydro power scheme at Amethyst Ravine, an extraction permit for rock from Kokatahi River, MacGregor Creek, Wainihinihi Creek, and Waitaha River, and an access easement for vehicular access to the Wanganui Quarry.

6. *Consideration of the Climate Change Commission Report*

The panel gave consideration to the objectives of the [Climate Change Commission report](#) and the recommended policy direction. The key focus of the advice is ensuring a shift to a low carbon and resilient Aotearoa. The panel does not consider the recommended land classification to limit future decision making over the land to mitigate emissions, adapt to climate change and sequester carbon.

7. *Strategic Policy Direction*

The assessment area is governed by the West Coast Te Tai o Poutini CMS. The CMS has been reviewed to identify all relevant provisions and conservation area-specific treaty settlement obligations when formulating the above recommendation, and the recommended land classification is considered to be consistent with the aims of the strategy.

The above recommendation has also been considered in conjunction with the Conservation General Policy and conforms with policy 6(b) regarding reclassification and 6(c) & (d) regarding disposal.